



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE AND PARTNERS SEIZE NEARLY 43,000 COUNTERFEIT ITEMS AT SUPER BOWL XL WORTH MORE THAN \$500,000

Counterfeit NFL Jerseys, Hats, Souvenirs and Other Non-NFL Counterfeits Found

DETROIT — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the National Football League, the Detroit Police Department and Wayne County Sheriffs Department today announced that a joint initiative targeting the sale of counterfeit merchandise at Super Bowl XL resulted in seizing nearly 42,924 items valued at more than \$535,000.

The initiative dubbed “OPERATION GRIDIRON” was launched more than a year ago as a partnership between ICE, the NFL, and other local law enforcement agencies in the Detroit area. The initiative targeted criminal organizations and individuals using local business establishments to smuggle, distribute and sell counterfeit merchandise in and around Super Bowl XL venues.

In the initial phases of Operation Gridiron, the [ICE Intellectual Property Rights \(IPR\) Coordination Center](#) in Washington, D.C., and the ICE Office of Investigations in Detroit provided more than 1,000 brochures on counterfeit goods to Detroit area businesses and individuals involved in the import/export of commodities and authorized retail sales representatives of Super Bowl XL merchandise.

Additionally, ICE agents in Detroit conducted more than 50 outreach presentations and educational opportunities to local law enforcement, the Super Bowl Host Committee, and other business forums to educate the public and business community leaders about the ongoing anti-counterfeiting enforcement initiative.

These outreach efforts resulted in ICE agents, NFL investigators, and local law enforcement officials receiving substantial assistance from the local business community in identifying purveyors of counterfeit goods. Investigators seized thousands of counterfeit NFL jerseys, caps, merchandise and other souvenirs being sold at unauthorized businesses, souvenir stands, and from the backs of vehicles.

"Enforcing America's counterfeiting laws are about protecting the rights of those who play by the rules; it's about keeping America a global leader in intellectual property rights; it's about keeping sub-par and possibly unsafe merchandise off our streets and away from our children; and it's about trying to keep billions of dollars of illicit funds out of the hands of organized criminal groups here and abroad," said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Detroit. "Major events such as the Super Bowl provide a great forum for us to educate the public about the hidden and often misunderstood dangers of this global criminal threat."

On the day of the Super Bowl alone ICE agents and partners seized 6,326 counterfeit items, including counterfeit shirts, football jerseys, blankets, leather coats, hats, baby bibs, towels in Detroit with a value of \$175, 400.

ICE employed similar initiatives recently during the Major League All-Star Game and the NBA Finals in the Detroit area seizing more than 2,100 items worth with an estimated retail value of \$50,000.

In May 2005, the United States Trade Representative estimated that U.S. industry loses between \$200 and \$250 billion to counterfeiting annually.

As the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, ICE plays a leading role in targeting criminal organizations responsible for producing, smuggling, and distributing counterfeit products. Counterfeit items are often manufactured, smuggled and distributed by international criminal organizations involved in a litany of other crimes. The sale of counterfeit items produces significant amounts of illicit profits that depart the legitimate U.S. economy and enter the black market economy. The ability for criminal networks to raise funds through the sale of counterfeit goods poses a significant vulnerability to National Security and Public Safety and targeting these violations is an ICE priority.

In fiscal year 2005, ICE agents and U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers together made 8,022 seizures of counterfeit goods worth \$93 million, an increase from the roughly 7,225 seizures the previous fiscal year. Together ICE and CBP have seized roughly \$700 million worth of counterfeit goods from FY 1998 through FY 2005.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.